

राष्ट्रपति का प्रेस सचिव,
राष्ट्रपति भवन,
नई दिल्ली-110004
भारत

PRESS SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN
NEW DELHI-110004
INDIA

No. F. 2-M/75 October 8, 1975

Dear Dr. Mishra,

The President is glad to know from your letter of the 1st October, 1975 that you are bringing out 'Lalit Narain Mishra Commemoration Volume'. He sends his best wishes for the success of your efforts and hopes that the Volume will throw light on the many-sided achievements of the late Mishraji.

Yours sincerely,
A.M. Abdul Hamid

Dr. Yugal Kishore Mishra,
Editor,
Lalit Narain Mishra Commemoration Volume,
C/o Department of Ancient Indian & Asian Studies,
Magadh University,
Bodh-Gaya (Bihar).



उप-राष्ट्रपति, भारत
नई दिल्ली
VICE-PRESIDENT
INDIA
NEW DELHI

6th September, 1975

I am glad to know that a Lalit Narain Mishra Commemoration Volume will be published soon. I understand th volume will contain his life sketch, his valuable contribution towards the making of modern Bihar and his services to the country in various capacities. I wish the publication all success.

Sd/-
(B. D. Jatti)



प्रधान मंत्री

सन्देश

श्री ललित नारायण मिश्र का सारा जीवन जनता की सेवा में समर्पित था। उन्होंने अपने छात्र-जीवन से ही देश और कांग्रेस के प्रति निष्ठा दिखलाई। बाद में वे संसद् में आए और कई मंत्रालयों में प्रशासक के रूप में सराहनीय कार्य किया तथा संस्था और शासन का ठोस काम आखिरी दम तक करते रहे।

उन्होंने अपनी सहृदयता के कारण बहुत से मित्र बनाए, लेकिन जो मज़बूती से काम करता है उसके शत्रु भी होते हैं। जानबूझ कर ललित बाबू को बदनाम करने के लिए और उनके खिलाफ घृणा पैदा करने के लिये, आयोजित तरीके से वातावरण बनाया गया जिससे उनकी जान गई। कुछ विरोधियों ने नीतिक शोक प्रकट किया परन्तु जिस हिंसा के वातावरण से यह दुर्घटना हुई उसको बदलने का सोचा भी नहीं। गीता में लिखा है कि जिनके मन क्रोध से भरे होते हैं उन्हें अच्छे-बुरे की सूझ नहीं रहती और न ही किसी और बात की तरफ ध्यान जाता है।

ललित बाबू सच्चे देश प्रेमी थे और उनको अपने प्रदेश बिहार की विशेष चिन्ता थी। उनकी उदारता हमेशा याद रहेगी। मुझे यह जानकर प्रसन्नता है कि ललित नारायण मिश्र स्मृति ग्रन्थ प्रकाशित किया जा रहा है, जिसमे उनके जीवन के विभिन्न पहलुओ पर प्रकाश डाला जाएगा। इस कार्य के लिए मेरी शुभकामनायें।

इन्दिरा गांधी

(इन्दिरा गांधी)

नई दिल्ली,
सितम्बर १२, १९७५

FIELD MARSHAL SAM MANEKSHAW, MC

STAVKA: SPRINGFIELD: COONOOR

12, NOVEMBER, 1975

It is with a heavy heart that I am sending this message for inclusion in the Lalit Narain Mishra Commemoration Volume. Lalit was my personal friend and almost a part of the Manekshaw family. During the four years that I was at Delhi there was seldom a day when he was not either at our home or I did not go to his house to see him. Our friendship was based on affection, trust and mutual respect. We shared each other's happiness and good fortune, and in times of sorrow and trouble cried on one another's shoulder.

Lalit was the most warm hearted and generous individual that I have ever come across: I have seer him helping people with money which he had to borrow, and I have also known quite a few of these same individuals whom he has helped so generously and unstintingly, decry and calumniate him, and yet Lalit forgave them and again and again helped them financially as also politically.

There are many in the land today who hold their high office and position because of Lalit Narain Mishra, because of his help and generosity, because of his advice and kindness. I sometimes wonder if they now remember this, and like me and my wife as also my two daughters, pray daily for the peace and tranquility of his soul.

Sam Manekshaw

Shri Lalit Narayan Mishra

Dr. Upendra Thakur

I

Comrades of a life-time when I depart,
When I leave your brotherhood, send a
Thought of compassion to me.
With what wealth of sympathy and gift of
Love have you endowed me
I go, but leave my soul behind:
May your paths be smooth and soft until you
attain your journey's end.

These lines speak amply of the man, the bold and fearless advocate of the downtrodden, the social thinker, the creative genius and, above all, a restless soul that Lalit Narayan Mishra (popularly called Lalit Babu) was. A born fighter against injustice, a very loyal and devoted colleague and friend, one of the most cultured men of his generation and a giant among politicians, Lalit Babu was one of those eminent sons of India who have left behind the impress of their remarkable personality on every sphere they entered. An administrator of rare ability, a patron of art and artists (the famous Madhubani painting, for instance), a born leader and inspirer of youth and a man of great common sense and sound judgment, Lalit Babu filled many high offices with distinction. He will always continue to live in the hearts of those who were privileged to have been associated with him whether as friends or as colleagues. A man of pleasing disposition and charming manners, his attitude was never dubious and such was his dominating personality that where others canvassed he commanded, where others appealed he dictated. Lalit Babu had a passion for politics and politics was his element. He had literally grown with it and ultimately passed out of it — the field of his life-long battles, his successes and triumphs — with undying fame and glory. In a sense the assassins' bomb had failed and the invincible soul triumphed!

II

Lalit Babu was born in the family of the celebrated scholar, Ayache Mishra (Mahamahopadhyaya Bhavanatha Mishra) who was the ideal of perfection among the Maithila Brahmanas and who is reputed never to have accepted even a gift, much less asked for it. As a mark of respect for this he came to be known as '*Ayache*' by which name he is still remembered and respected by posterity. His family has been serving the nation and the Congress since 1919 and has produced a revolutionary like Pandita Tej Nath Jha, who happened to be a close associate of Sardar Bhagat Singh; an agitator like Sri Upendra Mishra who fell a victim to the violent British retaliation while in prison in connection with the "Quit India" movement, and a successful scholar-administrator like Dr. Jagannath Mishra, his youngest brother, who was till recently the Chief Minister of Bihar. Thus, the patriotism, indomitable courage and self-respect which flowed in his veins, he was not prepared to compromise at any cost.

Born at Bajitpur in Muzaffarpur district (the family has since then shifted to Balua Bazar in Saharsa district) on February 2, 1923, this prince among men received his early education at C. M. College, Darbhanga and T.N.J. (now T.N.B.) College, Bhagalpur where he impressed his teachers and colleagues alike with his brilliance and sincerity of purpose. He took his M.A. degree in Economics from Patna University, got himself enrolled as a Research Scholar for a Ph.D. degree and did extensive research on "Nineteenth Century Colonial Policy of the British Empire." However, he could not complete his Ph.D. thesis as, at the call of the Father of the Nation, he too, like many other young men plunged deep into the national struggle for independence against the alien rulers. While a Research Scholar he was appointed a Lecturer in Economics in T.N.J. College and when he showed the appointment letter to his father, the latter felt disgusted and told him bluntly: "I shall give you double the amount you will receive as Lecturer every month. Do not worry for money. Devote yourself wholeheartedly to the cause of the Nation and the Society". When the Late Dr. S.K. Sinha, the Chief Minister of Bihar, wanted Lalit Babu to take to a lucrative job in the U.N.O., the father once again came in his way and advised him to give up this idea once for all. Here was a great father who could easily visualize the great future of his son and was prepared to make any sacrifice so that his son could climb to the highest peak of fame and glory. Thus, though the world of letters could not benefit from his scholarship and researches, the nation as a whole gained immensely from his experience and sacrifices as he literally gave away every ounce of energy to the cause of socialism and democracy which was so dear to him.

A whole-time Congress worker since 1939, Lalit Babu organized the Bihar Provincial Students Congress in 1941 and became its Secretary in 1944-46, and later its President in 1946-48. He underwent two terms of imprisonment in 1941 and 1942 when he was sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment for participation in the freedom movement. In 1948-49 he was elected a Fellow of the Patna University Senate in recognition of his services to the cause of education. He organized the first Bihar Economic Conference in 1950 at Patna, and as a Secretary of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee's Economic and Food departments, he carried out extensive research on jute cultivation and a survey of the food situation in Bihar. A member of the A.I.C.C. till his death, Lalit Babu was also a member of the Working Committee, Secretary of the Bihar Economic Association and President of the Bihar Jute Growers' Association.

Another notable event of his life was his election to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1952 and during his term he was a member of the Estimates Committee in 1955-56 and a member of the National Advisory Committee for Small Savings in 1956-57. During the period 1954-57 he was also in charge of public cooperation work of the Bharat Sevak Samaj for the Kosi project.

III

While talking to a friend Lalit Babu had once remarked: "People will recognize me only after my death. I have done nothing for myself, and whatever I have done, I have done for my country, and for my people." How apt this remark is can be judged from his ceaseless efforts to tame the Kosi, the river of sorrow, which had literally ravaged almost the whole of North Bihar for a long time, and this had earned him the nickname of "Kosi Babu" from the rustic village-folk who were the worst victims of its vagaries and desolation owing to its devastating floods. The great Bihar earthquake in 1934 had changed the terrain of almost the whole of North Bihar and thus deflected the Kosi 50 miles away from its course. In one swing the river had leaped from Purnea to Saharsa and had hit the neighbourhood of Nirmali (in Darbhanga) and swept the countryside clean of everything in the way — the railway lines, villages, townships, etc. It had turned green fields into sandy stretches of waste. In the monsoon the entire countryside, ten miles on each side of the river, became a rolling mass of water. This is where people suffered the worst hazards of human existence through floods, diseases, and death but they managed to survive.

Nirmali on the western fringe of the Kosi belt (there was neither valley nor marked water-course) and Supaul on the eastern flank, were the two God-forsaken places in North Bihar until they became the headquarters of the Kosi embankment project. It was a Himalayan task that was completed through the efforts of this promising young man on whose call the peasants had cooperated beyond expectation by surrendering their valuable paddy-lands and orchards for the embankment, (which later saved millions of lives,) without receiving a single paisa as compensation. On the level of physical labour about fifty thousand workers were secured through village panchayats or labour cooperatives in the neighbourhood of the embankments. There was no profit-making as distinguished from works under contractors. The only aim was to complete the 30 mile long embankment and to ensure that all the money went to workers. A baffling human problem was thus ably solved through nine months of trials and tribulations and the river of sorrow was in no time turned into the river of plenty and happiness which won him unstinted praise from Pandit Nehru, and the nation itself. It was therefore no wonder that the once afflicted people wept and cried over the tragic death of their beloved "Kosi Babu", the man who was mainly responsible for turning the desert of the Kosi belt into a granary by getting the Kosi Project with its irrigation facilities underway. And, his was where he started to blaze this controversial career and this is where fate had ordained his tragic end. But his memory will endure.

IV

Lalit Babu's re-election to the Lok Sabha in 1957 paved the way for further successes and triumphs. Pandit Nehru was so pleased with his dynamism and magnetic personality, which he had shown at the time of the Kosi-embankment, that he appointed him Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning, Labour and Employment. In 1960 he became Deputy Minister in the same Ministry. During this period he was a delegate to the 42nd Session of the International Labour Conference at Geneva and visited the United States to study industrial relations in coal and steel industries. During 1962-64 he was Chairman of the National Projects Construction Corporation Limited. He became General Secretary of the All-India Bharat Sevak Samaj and the Indian Steel Workers' Federation in June 1962. A member of the Working Committee of the Bihar INTUC he was also a member of the Working Committee of the All India General Council of the INTUC and also Editor of the *Congress Forum*, a journal of the Congress Forum for Socialist Action.

Lalit Babu was appointed Deputy Minister of Home Affairs on 26 February 1964. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in the same year and was re-elected in 1966 and remained its member until his election to the Lok Sabha in 1971. On January 25, 1966 he was transferred as Deputy Minister for Finance in which capacity he attended the Colombo Plan Conference at Karachi that year. On March 13, 1967 he was appointed Minister of State for Labour and Rehabilitation; he attended the Governing Body meeting of the I.L.O. at Geneva in October 1967. On November 15, 1967 he became Minister for Defence Production.

From June 1970 to January 2, 1975 is a telling story of Lalit Babu's great triumphs and glory as well as the impending shadows that ultimately overwhelmed him. As Minister of Foreign Trade from June 1970 to 4 February 1973 he made his great mark as this period witnessed the increasing tempo of export promotion and State participation in foreign trade. He led the Indian delegation to the Second UNCTAD Conference at Santiago in Chile and also organised the Third Asian Trade Fair known as ASIA-72 in New Delhi.

As an organizer and devoted worker he grew in popularity to such an extent that he was unanimously elected a member of the Congress Working Committee at the Bidhan Nagar Congress Session in December, 1972 and on February 5, 1973 he was appointed Minister of Railways with Cabinet rank. As Minister of Railways he excelled all his predecessors, and Bihar and other backward Sates got their due for the first time after 27 years of independence. Once he was asked as to how he sanctioned new Railway lines for backward areas when the development of the railways is ordinarily guided by the policy that new rail tracks should be laid in areas where there is no likelihood of loss. To this he retorted : "according to this policy no new Railway line can ever be laid in backward regions." He believed that it was necessary to have a network of railway lines even in the backward regions to ensure national development. As for loss he was confident that once the backwardness was removed, there would be no deficit, no loss. He had the courage of his convictions and he set about the task with singleness of purpose. He rendered yeoman service to Bihar by providing a network of rail lines, long-distance comfortable trains such as Jayanti Janata, Janaki Express, etc, by sanctioning new broad gauge and metre gauge railway lines, by establishing a Railway Service Commission at Muzaffarpur and in many other ways. And while making a gift of the 53 km. broad gauge line to the people of North Bihar he fell a victim to the assassins' bomb at Samastipur on January 2, 1975. The speech delivered by him at Samastipur on this fateful day etched out ambitious plans of broad gauge lines in the State and a railway

bridge near Patna. This shows how anxious he was to serve the State. But the hands of the assassins suddenly snatched him away from our midst. There can be no greater heinous crime than this and history has few parallels to record. .

On the national scene what Lalit Babu achieved, others could not. As leader of the official Indian delegations he visited a number of countries in Asia, Europe and North and South America. He led the Indian delegation to the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) at Honkong and Manila, and attended the meeting of the 77 developing countries at Lima, Peru, that preceded it. He conducted negotiations in England with the British Government on trade preferences and with the French Government in Paris on economic relations between India and the European Economic Community. He visited the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary for trade talks with the governments of those countries. He also visited Pakistan, Switzerland, United States, Hongkong, Belgium and many other countries in connection with official business and left the mark of his personality wherever he went.

V

A man of strong convictions he did not believe in a Sermon on the Mount. His intelligence and commonsense were unfathomable and his actions were always practical and helpful to the nation at large. His benevolence knew no bounds, and even if he erred, it was not without virtue. Only those who never met Lalit Babu, might have nursed a grievance against him, true or false. For, even his bitterest critics and die-hard enemies could not remain immune to his magnetic personality and became his admirers even from the first meeting. His geniality of temperament, urbanity, generosity and magnanimity were legendary and any one who came into contact with him became his friend. Even those who indulged in vicious calumny against him received his help and patronage in times of need and distress. Of these innumerable instances can be cited.

His interest in Bihar was so great that he could go to any length to achieve his objects, economic or political or social, for the upliftment of this State. If late Dr. S. K. Sinha maintained political stability with his stature and wide outlook, Lalit Babu was like the beacon-light who not only nurtured the Congress in Bihar and maintained political stability and a Congress majority against all odds but also put the State at an important place on the national map with his dynamism, large-heartedness and towering personality. For over a decade he dominated the politics of this

State in a measure which no other politician of his age had done so far. His advice was listened to with due attention by the Congress High Command and he had become a virtual authority on Bihar affairs in the Prime Minister's inner circle. His sincerity to the cause of the country and the Congress was never doubted. In spite of the blistering attack by the Opposition on the Licence scandal, the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi stood by him like a rock and this was no mean tribute to Lalit Babu who had then the Foreign Trade portfolio. His speech given to the House (Lok Sabha) on this occasion exemplifies his sincere devotion to the cause of the country and also the high integrity that he possessed. He had thus weathered the Parliamentary storm which any other person of less calibre would have succumbed to. It would have been political death. But, Fate had willed otherwise. He was to die as a martyr for the welfare of the people to whom he had pledged to serve ever since his student days.

VI

Great in life and still greater in death, Lalit Babu fell the first victim to right reaction on January 3, 1975 which will go down in the history of India as the blackest day. His phenomenal rise to power and fame had won him innumerable enemies who were convinced that so long as he was on the scene, it was difficult for them to achieve their sinister target. In order to attain their goal they took to a low form of calumny and character-assasination unheard of in the history of civilized political life. "Give the dog a bad name and then hang him" is an old fascist technique which believes in first destroying a man's reputation by mounting a virulent campaign of character-assassination and then killing him. First make much of the man and then throw a hand-grenade to eliminate Lalit Narayan Mishra physically. It was known that Lalit Babu had been a prime target of a countrywide hate compaign for several months before his death. This campaign was bound to result in something like the shame and tragedy of Samastipur. But, those whc organized this great killing have not achieved their aim. And, Lalit Babu has not died in vain. He will always live in the hearts of the grateful people as the first martyr in the Indian people's fight against social injustice, and economic tyranny.

A man with a large range of interests, a brilliant mind and a prodigious memory Lalit Babu had sanity, tolerance, and independence of spirit, and these were the attributes that the world could see, things "that took the eye and had the price." Quick to discover talent he was ever ready to foster it with the touch of the creator and the finished skill of a master

craftsman. In fact, he always shone in his true colours, never in borrowed feathers. His brilliance was pure gold, no gilding above the brass.

It is said whom the Gods love die young, and Lalit Babu was not old when he, who left many speechless in his lifetime, left the whole world speechless by his eternal silence on January 3, 1975. In him we have lost a true son of India imbued with our Indian culture; in him we have lost a great patriot and administrator; in him we have lost a great friend who was genuinely loved by his people; in him we have lost a great patron of art who was at the same time a great champion of the poor; in him we have lost a great giver who gave away thousands to his friends and critics alike but himself died in debts; and in him we have lost a perfect gentleman, large-hearted, generous to a fault, and loyal to friends throughout his life—the like of whom we shall never see again.

A Leading Light

A brief life-sketch of L. N. Mishra

Dr. Yugal Kishore Mishra

Lalit Narayan Mishra was born at Bajitpur in Muzaffarpur district in Bihar on February 2, 1923. He belonged to the family of *Ayachi* Mishra of Mithila. The title *Ayachi* was given because the owner was known for not demanding any charity. His career as a student was good and showed an early interest in politics. During his early years of comparative affluence he attended a school and was good at his studies. Later he was coached at home. He was a warm-hearted and lively lad. Football and boating were always his favourite pastimes. For his university examinations he studied first at C.M. College, Darbhanga, and then at T.N.J. College, Bhagalpur. He took his Master's Degree in Economics from Patna University. Later, as a research scholar he did extensive work on "The Nineteenth Century Colonial Policy of the British." All through his student days he had been a full-time Congress worker.

Lalit Babu, as he was known among friends, entered politics early in life. In 1941, he organized the Bihar Provincial Students' Congress. He was imprisoned twice in 1941 and 1942. On the second occasion he was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment for participation in the freedom movement. Between 1944-46 he was the students' Congress Secretary and from 1946-48 he was its President. He became a member of the All-India Congress Committee in 1950. He was also a Member of the Working Committee of the Saharsa District Congress Committee and Secretary of the Bihar Economic Association and President of Bihar Jute Growers' Association.

Lalit Narayan Mishra was a good friend, an able administrator and a man of outstanding organizational ability. Mishra was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1952 and during his tenure became a Member of the Estimates Committee 1956-57. Between 1954-57, he was in charge of the Public Co-operation work of the Bharat Sewak Samaj for the Kosi Project. On his re-election to the Lok Sabha in 1957, Mishra was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning, Labour and Em-

ployment and in 1960 he became the Deputy Minister for Labour, Employment and Planning. This was the period when he shot into public notice. During 1962-64, Mishra was the Chairman of the National Projects Construction Corporation. In June 1962 he became General Secretary of the All India Bharat Sewak Samaj.

He was also a Member of the Working Committee of the Bihar INTUC and the All India General Council of the INTUC. He was the Editor of the *Congress Forum*, a journal of the Congress Forum for Socialist Action. On February 26, 1964, Mishra was appointed Deputy Minister of Home Affairs. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha about the same time, was re-elected in 1966 and remained its Member until his election to the Lok Sabha in 1971. On January 25, 1966, he was transferred as the Deputy Minister for Finance. Little over a year later he was appointed Minister of State for Labour and Rehabilitation. On November 15,1967, he became Minister for Defence Production. From June 1970 to February 4, 1973, he was Minister for Foreign Trade.

His term in Foreign Trade was very fruitful. It was marked by increasing tempo in export promotion and State participation in foreign trade. He conducted negotiations in England with the British Government on trade preferences and in Paris with the French Government on economic relations between India and the Economic Community. He visited the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary for trade talks with those countries. Mishra was unanimously elected as a Member of the Congress Working Committee at the Bidhan Nagar Congress Session in December, 1972. On February 5, 1973, he was appointed Minister for Railways with Cabinet rank. While serving in this capacity he was killed in a bomb explosion in 1975.

During his stewardship of the Railway Ministry, Mishra brought about a conceptual change in the application of orthodox financial criteria to the construction of railway lines in backward areas. A number of new lines were planned by him and surveys for these lines are now being undertaken in several backward areas. During the nearly two years of his stewardship, Mishra helped the railways to stabilize after a succession of strikes and agitations had seriously depleted railway finances. He could do this because he was a man of varied experience, who at an early age was able to combine hectic political activity with scholarly life. Despite his involvement in the freedom struggle from the age of sixteen, Mishra was able to make his mark in research on subjects as diverse as jute cultivation and 19th century colonial pelicies of Britain.

A 'good friend' to all and a dynamic budding personality of Indian politics, L.N. Mishra served the country, the Congress and the common man with dedication and energy. In the words of the former Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, "Mr. Mishra was a large hearted person, abounding in sympathy, always approachable." Mr. D.P. Chattopadhyaya described Lalit Babu as a grassroots worker and a courageous politician. Mr. Mishra had held the centre of the regional political stage so long and so well that nobody could talk of Bihar politics without talking of him. His generation will remember him with love, respect, and honour. He was a patriot, who put the country before everything else. Lalit Babu was a fascinating person. He had a persuasive voice. He could stay composed under trying conditions. He was very happy and felt extremely excited whenever he met peasants and village people. The old 'huts and houses', the rivers and ponds greatly delighted him. He had a passion for village life but never liked solitude. In everything he did we find underlying kindness that merged into the humanness so pecularily his own. In his own words, "I begin to find out that nothing but love and kindness will do in this damned world. I am sick of selfishness."

Despite these many lovable qualities Mishra had his critics and they were many and formidable. He was a controversial figure even in his own party circles. With his great influence at the Centre he could make and unmake Chief Ministers in Bihar. This created many more enemies. They pointed out that he was responsible for thousands of suffering railwaymen being deprived of their jobs, demoted and hunted out of their quarters. On January 2, 1975 Mr. Mishra was going to Samastipur for the inauguration of the Samastipur-Muzzafarpur railway line. By a quirk of fate Mr. Mishra who was to have left New Delhi early the day before was delayed by over three hours by fog and was late in arriving at Samastipur to perform the inauguration. Soon after Mishra's arrival at the Darbhanga airport en-route to Samastipur, he was asked by men close to him not to proceed to Samastipur as, according to them, there was a serious threat to his life. Taking the warning casually, he told them, "What harm if I die while serving the country."

Mishra spoke unusually forcefully that day for half-an-hour. As he finished and turned towards the staircase to leave, there was a flash of blinding light, a muffled sound followed by a blast. Mishra was knocked down and had to be helped to his feet by a Congress worker, Mrs. Ram Sukumani Devi. The Minister gave a shriek of pain. Most others on the rostrum hit by the blast cried out in pain and agony. Those who had seen it said that there was a lot of blood on the rostrum. They said that the explosive which was later described by the authorities to be of sophisticated

manufacture was a war bomb. It had been thrown on the rostrum with the pin removed or it might have been rolled on to the rostrum by one of those who stood close by near the staircase. But none of the eye-witnesses or people sitting on the rostrum knew how it had all happened.

L.N. Mishra died in the Danapur Railway Hospital on January 3, 1975. According to the doctors attending on him, his death was due to "perforation of the intestines causing shock." He underwent an emergency operation of the abdomen at about 5 a.m. and his death occurred at about 9.30. He had received a serious injury in the abdomen which caused profuse bleeding. An x-ray photograph showed the presence of metallic particles in his body. A team of doctors who had begun preparing as soon as Mishra was admitted, began operating at 3.00 a.m. The operation lasted six hours. The operation was to remove a splinter lodged near the heart. Death came soon after the abdomen was stitched. Dr. U.N. Sahi, Professor of Surgery of the Patna Medical College Hospital, who was one of the team said that Mishra's heart stopped at 8.30 a.m. but cardiac massage was continued. He was declared dead at 9.30 a.m.

The tragic event shock the nation. Mr. V.P. Naik expressing "shock and distress" over Mishra's death said "the circumstances in which Mishra met his death made the tragedy more poignant and grave." It was "one of the most gruesome tragedies of free India," said Mr. Chandra Shekar. Mr. Y.B. Chavan mourned the loss of "a valued colleague." Mr. Brahmanand Reddy missed "an enthusiastic supporter of progressive causes" and "a loyal friend." He described Mishra's death as "a national loss." Mr. S.C. Sinha, the Chief Minister of Assam, said, "The bomb that was hurled at this illustrious leader is in fact indicative of the seriousness of the fascist threat to our democratic ideals." Mrs. Gandhi said that he had "served the country, the Congress and the common man with dedication and energy." She added that his "premature death is a great loss to the nation." The Sarvodaya leader, Mr. J. P. Narayan held that "the circumstances in which Mr. Mishra sustained bomb injuries and died after an operation had raised doubts in the public mind which must be cleared through an enquiry." He wondered how someone could plant a bomb, possibly a time bomb, below the dais where many senior police officials and policemen were on duty.

There was a nationwide clamour for an inquiry. Several leaders also demanded a thorough investigation. Mishra's is one of the major political murders after independence. First was Gandhi's then we had the very controversial murder of Kairon, the Chief Minister of Punjab. The last is L.N. Mishra's murder which is not easy to explain away although it is true that by the time of the incident Mishra had travelled far from the calmer days

of his career. His power had grown a great deal and with it the hostility of his opponents. More than once he was the centre of controversy. No doubt his public relations were excellent, and he almost always had a good press. Then his base in Bihar was strong and it was generally felt that more often than not his word was final with the Central Congress leadership on any matter related to Bihar. Yet his days became less cheerful as they went by.

Mr. Mishra's first moment of embarrasment came in 1964 when he was accused of mismanaging the funds of the National Projects Construction Corporation of which he was Chairman between 1962 and 1964. He defended himself stoutly, though his name was controversially involved in what has come to be known as the Import Licence Scandal in November 1974. Nevertheless his anguish was deep for he strongly felt that the attacks were being made on him only to malign him and tranish his image. His anguish was all the more for he believed that some of his own partymen were helping his detractors.

Then came the railway strike which doubtless left a trail of bitterness and made Mishra unpopular in many quarters. Though he did no more than what he and the whole Government considered right Mishra became the target of bitter resentment and attack. Those who saw Mishra towards the close of the winter session of the Parliament that year recalled how much he had changed physically between the autumn and winter sessions —those two sessions in which he was the focus of opposition attacks. It took a lot out of him. He aged, his walk slouched, and his former back-slapping bon homie nearly disappeared. Many would later remember with sympathy the strain breaking through his last intervention in the Lok Sabha in the debate on a motion of breach of privilege against him. Seeing him from the visitors' gallery stoically sitting through days of personal attacks of unbelievable ferocity on him, one wondered what kept him chained to that seat. The ferocity of that struggle visibly deepened the lines on his face and bloated the bags under his eyes in a space of six weeks.

Some idea of those days in Parliament can be had from a few quotations from the debates. On December 18,1974 Jyotirmoy Bosu moved:

"That this House resolves that Shri Lalit Narayan Mishra, a member of this House and a Member of Cabinet be removed from the membership of this House for committing serious improprieties and malpractices as could be seen from the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the affairs of Bharat Sewak Samaj and in particular as reported in the said Commission's report in Volume II...

"Sir believe me, I am particularly unhappy because I have to do this unpleasant task to stand and impeach a fellow member of this House whom I have known for nine years. I have nothing personal against him

because I am neither a Congressman who would try to get his job if he goes nor am I in his organisation trying to fight him in his State or elsewhere. He has done a lot of drumbeating and tomtoming. This he is doing for years and I shall prove with documentary evidence as to what he deserves."

The Railway Minister Mr. L. N. Mishra while intervening in the debate clarified his position thus :

"I would say that there were certain misgivings or certain misunderstandings about certain points..."

"The Hon'ble Member said that I claimed privilege and I did not like to appear before the Kapur Commission. This is not a fact. I made it clear to the Kapur Commission four or five times that if they want me, I will appear before them or if they want some information, I am prepared to supply that. I voluntarily made this offer. I was not interested in the Kosi construction work. I have refuted it. I again refute it. I have no personal interest in it nor any interest for my family or son. If I am directly responsible, I am prepared to pay the price. But this is a big organisation. One organiser runs away with the car or another runs away with a jeep. You can not be sure of the conduct of every individual. The obduracy with which Shri Bosu has made and repeated these allegations defies all comprehension. I can only say that mere repetition of unfounded allegations does not and cannot give them credibility or reliability...

"In Shri Bosu's allegations facts have been twisted and distorted. Conclusions have been based on conjectures and documents have been dislodged by wishful hearsay..."

Again on May 9, 1974, the Hon'ble Speaker of the Lok Sabha received notices of motions of No Confidence in the Council of Ministers under Rule 148 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha from Messrs. Jyotirmoy Bosu, Dinen Bhattacharya, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Samar Guha, Indrajit Gupta, C. K. Chandrappan, Bhogendra Jha, Ranen Sen, S. M. Banerjee, Sanar Mukherjee, Shyamnandan Mishra, Madhu Limaye, Madhu Dandavate and H. N. Mukherjee. The first notice was by Jyotirmoy Bosu. The motion read that "this House expresses its want of confidence in the Council of Ministers." The reasons given were "failure to arrive at a negotiated settlement with Railway employees and the bad treatment meted out to them." Jyotirmoy Bosu sought leave of the House to move his motion of No Confidence. As not less than 50 members rose the Speaker informed the House that the leave was granted. Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu moved that this House expresses its want of confidence in the Council of Ministers. Those who participated in the marathon debate included Mr. Samar Mukherjee, Mr. A. P. Sharma, Mr. Indrajit

Gupta, Mr. K. D. Malviya, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Mr. Chandrajit Yadav, Mr. C. M. Stephen, Mr. P. M. Mehta, Mr. H. K. L. Bhagat, Mr. Frank Anthony, Mr. Dinesh Chandra Goswamy, Mr. K. Mayathevar, Mr. Narsing Narain Pandey, Mr. Piloo Mody, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Mr. Samar Guha, Mr. Vikram Mahajan, Mr. Jambwant Dhote, Mr. Shyamnandan Mishra, Mr. Bhagwat Jha Azad, Mr. H. M. Patel, Mr. Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, Mr. P. G. Mavalankar, Mr. Jagdish Chandra Dixit, Mr. Tridib Chaudhuri, Prof. Madhu Dandavate, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu. The Railway Minister Mr. L. N. Mishra replied to the debate.

In his reply Mishra said that it was wrong to say that the Railway Minister was making preparations for crushing the labour movement and not for a settlement of the strike. The Lok Sabha, he said, was aware of the efforts that were being made to come to a settlement. However, it was also a fact that preparations for a strike were going on all over the country and "naturally we had to alert our officers and the organisation to meet the situation that might arise." He said that India was passing through a grave economic crisis and the Indian Railways, at that moment were not in a position to take any risk. It had been said that the Government did not want a negotiated settlement. This was not correct. They wanted a negotiated settlement. He said he had been talking to George Fernandes since the 4th or 5th of January. The result was that the Government had not accepted only two demands till the evening of the 30th. These were (1) that railwaymen be treated as industrial workers, and (2) that they be given parity with the public sector and have a revision of dearness allowance and bonus. These points were still under discussion. Therefore, to say that the Government was not interested in negotiations was not fair. Also on the questions of bonus and parity he could not negotiate because they involved a very large amount of money. As a result of the Pay Commission's recommendations Rs. 110 crores had been paid. If these demands were accepted there would be a liability of Rs. 600 crores. An increase of 40 per cent in the wage bill in one year alone had already been given. "The house should consider whether in any country, in any industry, workers got a rise of 40 per cent in one year... Mr. Fernandes was not working for a strike, he was working for something else. He wanted to cripple the national economy; he wanted to hold the country to ransom..." He had requested Mr. Fernandes who was leading the All India Railwaymen's Federation, to settle the issue on the 30th itself. "If we wanted to arrest him we could have done it on the 30th night when he was here. We had sufficient evidence to show that he had enough preparations. The Hindi weekly *Awaz* of Dhanbad of April 28th

had reported that Mr. George Fernandes in the course of his tour between Gomoh and Andal had asked railwaymen to paralyze train movement and teach a lesson to the Railway Minister. According to the report he also said that if the Railways did not move for 15 days, half the country's population would die of hunger because famine would result in several parts of the country from obstruction of train movement. All this showed that Mr. Fernandes was working for paralyzing the economy of the country." At Mughalsarai two trains had been stopped by violent mobs stopping in turn six other trains. The mob beat up the railway staff who continued to work and paraded them through the streets. A large number of workers of the railways had stuck to their posts of duty. From the floor of the House he would like to say a word of cheer to them. The country could not forget their sense of dedication at this critical hour. He had every confidence that the section of misguided railwaymen would not persist in the path of error. He had reports from a large number of centres to show that more of them were returning to their posts of duty.

Such was the strain under which Mishra worked during his last days. Apart from the shock his death caused, it also brought forth a nationwide clamour for an inquiry. Some of the biggest leaders of the country demanded a thorough investigation. As a result a one-man Commission of Inquiry was appointed under Justice K. K. Mathew on the 10th of February 1975. The Bihar Government also appointed a six-member Medical Experts Committee to report on the medical treatment given to Mishra. The Medical Committee blamed the Chief Medical Officer of the North-Eastern Railway for delaying medical aid. In its report submitted to the State Government in the first week of March 1975, the Chairman of the Committee, Air Marshall Ajit Nath said that the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Bhalla's diagnosis of Mishra's injuries as 'skin deep' was misleading. The Committee also reported that a delay of about two hours had occurred in the departure of the train at Patna Junction. The Danapur Railway Hospital was only six miles away and a fast train should not have taken more than ten to twelve minutes to reach.

The question uppermost in the minds of the people was why was Mishra not given proper medical treatment at Samastipur itself when there were two big hospitals there where others whose injuries appeared at that time more serious than Mishra's were admitted. It was also not clear whether Dr. Bhalla made his statement after a superficial examination or made it under some pressure.

All investigations seemed to lead to a dead end. The Central Bureau of Investigation working simultaneously on six different theories fared no better. The first was that the explosion was the result of a carefully plan-

ned conspiracy. The second was that a criminal had done it or had been hired to do it. The third, that a fanatic of an extreme group had been directed to do it. The fourth was that the assassination was prompted by intra-party rivalries. The fifth theory was that it was the result of a private grudge. According to the last theory, that is the sixth, the bomb found by the tracks was left there by the same person/group that had placed the bomb on the dais. Investigations have been going on and arrests have been made but they have not even helped to narrow down the focus or find some definite clue. The finding of the Mathew Commission when published may tell us more. In the meantime the question of who was responsible for Mishra's death continues to agitate the minds of people. There are those who think that his tough handling of the railwaymen's strike could have angered the railway workers. But it was common knowledge that he was not the architect of the policy and his heart was not in it.

Whatever the outcome of the Mathew Commission or any other investigation, Mishra will be remembered in Bihar and in India as a political leader of national stature. In his State he will be remembered with gratitude by many both for his personal favours and for what he was able to do for the State. His career as a national leader suddenly ran into bitter controversies which ended in his death.

Mishra was a warm and affectionate person. He had great goodness of heart. He had plenty of courage and daring. For a time his influence was very considerable but gradually a reaction to it set in. When he died he was a lonely man who was as much loved as he was feared. But those who feared him knew they could always count on hisgene rosity. His generosity was a quality one could recognize him by for even in his most difficult days it did not desert him.

Lalit Babu : A Tribute to his Memory

Dr. Jagannath Mishra
Ex-Chief Minister, Bihar

Lalit Babu, Mr. Lalit Narayan Mishra, was the eldest of five brothers and I was the youngest. My father loved Lalit Babu to his utmost and Lalit Babu loved me very dearly. I cannot explain his affection towards me, except perhaps because I was the youngest. Lalit Babu was more than a father to me. It seems to me that some hidden power may have bound us together in affection and attachment. It was a kind of relationship which cannot be described in words. I recollect Lalit Babu as one who was filled with Divine grace. I had opportunities to stay with him as a student when in college. He took care of my studies and my health. After vacation, on my leaving home for college, he would give me extra pocket money. I found him an alert, intelligent and well-meaning guardian.

Family Interest in Politics

The members of my family, specially my father and uncle, took a keen interest in the freedom movement and cousin, Pandit Rajendra Mishra was also an active participant. Lalit Babu too, was a born patriot and he longed to chase the British out of the country and make it free. The atmosphere in our family was congenial to his patriotic attitude and aptitude for political work. My father also encouraged him to participate in the freedom movement.

Lalit Babu started early. He became a member of the Thana Congress Committee when still a student in 1940. He took an active part in the Quit India Movement and faced the odds with a spirit of daring and adventure; he received a bullet injury in his leg and was also imprisioned for four years. But this did not discourage either my father or my brother. My father often met him in jail, but the idea of getting him released by asking for a pardon did not enter his head. He preferred an appeal in the High Court which reduced the sentence and Lalit Babu was soon released.

Lalit Babu showed extraordinary qualities of organization and leadership right from his student days. He studied at Chandradhari Mithila College,

Tejnarayan Jubilee College, and at Patna College. He took interest in the Chhatra Congress everywhere and picked out students who were dedicated to the national cause. Lalit Babu was a popular figure and much loved by his friends and contemporaries. The affluence of our family had made Lalit Babu very liberal and charitable. He had high regard and consideration for his poor friends and he often provided them with clothes, blankets and money. Any body who came to ask was helped by Lalit Babu; no one ever went away disappointed.

Popularity

His liberalism, his warmth, his humility and his eagerness to serve, made Lalit Babu very popular. He organized a big Conference of the Chhatra Congress in Patna in 1946. Later Lalit Babu took his Masters in Economics and got himself enrolled for Ph.D. In the meanwhile, he got an appointment as Lecturer in Economics in the TNB College at Bhagalpur. When Lalit Babu sought father's permission to join this post, father was very angry. He knew the abilities of Lalit Babu and was not in favour of his son joining any service. He said that Lalit Babu could get double the salary he would receive as a lecturer. He should work enthusiastically in the social and national spheres.

Lalit Babu once more got an offer of employment with better emoluments but father again refused.

Dr. Shrikrishna Sihha, the Chief Minister of Bihar at that time, was highly impressed with the capabilities of Lalit Babu. He wanted to send Lalit Babu to the Interim Parliament, but was unable to do so for various reasons. Then we wanted Lalit Babu to go for some high position in the UNO, but again father forbade him.

Election to AICC

Lalit Babu was elected a member of the All-India Congress Committee. He made his mark there and the people of his area felt the promise in him. Our district Saharsa is one of the most backward areas of Bihar. A decade and a half ago it was even more steeped in backwardness. This area suffered the ravages of the floods of the Kosi. The common people of this district had seen the worst kind of poverty. The name of the district is Saharsa which ironically means an area full of joy. The prevailing conditions were just the contrary. Lalit Babu set himself to change this miserable picture and give a new shape to the area. The people of the area looked upon him as a leader. They felt that Lalit Babu's endeavours would succeed. Lalit Babu too went among the people, discussed their problems with

all sincerity and tried his best to solve them. He did not worry about his personal discomforts. He met people on a footing of equality and they considered Lalit Babu as their own brother. There was complete understanding between them. Lalit Babu also rendered financial assistance to a large number of people. All this made him immensely popular with the people and he won the 1952 Lok Sabha elections by a wide margin of votes.

Politicians often forget their constituency after their elections, but not so Lalit Babu. He had organized a conference of the Kosi-sufferers while he was study'ng for his M.A. He had drawn the attention of Dr. Rajendra Prasad and other leaders of the country towards the sad plight of the residents of the Kosi basin. As a member of Parliament, he spoke on this subject several times and made Pandit Nehru, the then Prime Minister, take special interest in a solution for this problem. He, therefore, came to be known as Kosi Mishra in Parliament. He had completely identified himself with the land of his birth and the people.

By the time Lalit Babu joined the Lok Sabha in 1952 the first Five Year Plan had already been introduced. He brought Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Shrikrishna Sinha to the scene to witness the ravages wrought by the Kosi in 1954. It was largely owing to his efforts that the Kosi Project was included in the First Five Year Plan and a beginning towards its implementation was made in 1955. Lalit Babu organized the people's participation in the project at the instance of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Gulzarilal Nanda. The Bharat Sewak Samaj also offered its helping hand in this work. Shramdan was offered by a large number of people resulting in the early construction of embankments. This arrangement meant less profits to the contractors and middlemen but more wages to labourers. A large number of persons found employment in the Kosi Project and an era of happiness began to dawn over this area.

Kosi and the BSS

Lalit Babu was instrumental in implementing the multi-development schemes in the Kosi area with the help of the Bharat Sewak Samaj. He also came to the rescue of the jute-growers whose plight had become deplorable owing to a constant and steady decline in the price. He placed this question before the Parliament. He also discussed the question of the reconstruction of railway lines damaged by the Kosi floods.

He got an opportunity to give shape to his ideas when he became Deputy Minister in the Department of Labour in the Central Government. After some time he was entrusted the Department of Foreign Trade and later became Railway Minister in the Central Cabinet. The Kosi was tamed

to a large extent by the construction of a barrage and embankments. This protected the area comprising the districts of Saharsa, Purnea and Darbhanga from floods. The irrigation network set up on the eastern side of the Kosi changed the entire landscape. Lalit Babu also made efforts to get the scheme of an irrigation network sanctioned for the western side of the Kosi and a beginning was made on January 30, 1974. He had discussed this question with the Nepal Government when he visited that country as the Indian Minister for Foreign Trade. He was also instrumental in establishing the Jute Corporation and thereby arresting the fall in the price of jute.

Love for the People

Lalit Babu loved his motherland and the people of his area. The people reciprocated his love. But this does not mean that he disregarded the hopes and aspirations of the people of the other areas and treated them indifferently. He knew that Bihar as a whole was a backward and poor State. He wanted to do away with the backwardness of Bihar and wanted the State to come up with the other developed States of the country. Very often he referred to the backwardness of Bihar and drew up various schemes and had them implemented through the various Ministries where he had held office. He established the Bihar Export Corporation when he was Minister for Foreign Trade. He also opened a Railway Office at Darbhanga, which gave an opportunity to the youngmen of north Bihar to find employment. He sanctioned the extension of a broad-gauge line from Samastipur to Barabanki. He helped in the establishment of the Mithila University in Darbhanga to expand the scope, quality and the content of education in north Bihar. He got a survey made for laying new railway lines in Rampur, Dumka, Gaya, Rajgir, Ranchi and Lohardaga in the south of Bihar. Ultimately he gave away his life while performing a public duty and achieving the goal of taking Bihar to the highest peak of achievement.

Lalit Babu served the country as a whole and made significant contributions to the national good and to the wellbeing of the common people. He was responsible for the increase in the output of defence equipment when he was the Defence Production Minister. This led to the victory of our country in the 1971 war against Pakistan. His studies in Economics assisted Lalit Babu when he gave a tangible and practical shape to our export promotion policy and was able to get a favourable trade balance. Whenever he visited foreign lands, he maintained the dignity and honour of his country and gave evidence of his merit and efficiency.

A Great Organizer

Lalit Babu possessed an extraordinary capacity of setting up and controlling organizations. This became evident when the Congress was split up in two in 1969. All the top leaders of the Congress were in favour of the Syndicate Congress. Lalit Babu alone sided with Shrimati Indira Gandhi and it was largely owing to his efforts that the Congress came out victorious in the General Elections held in 1971 and 1972. His sincerity and complete dedication to the cause yielded results and on both the occasions the Congress won with an overwhelming majority.

Lalit Babu had also great love for his mother tongue Maithili. He got opportunities to visit many foreign countries and meet many people but he had so deeply imbibed the culture of the motherland that there was absolutely no question of his coming under any kind of foreign influence. He was an ardent supporter of Indian culture and was always ready to do anything for the development of the arts, culture and literature of the country. This explains his deep and abiding interest in the Madhubani School of painting, an interest which subsequently led to its regeneration and winning recognition for itself in the world.

It is now our responsibility to carry on the work of Lalit Babu, which remained unfinished owing to his tragic and cruel demise.

Lalit Babu wanted to put Bihar on the all-India map and desired its all-round development. He wanted an early end to his State's backwardness and see the rise of a new Bihar. We must try to realize that dream.

Lalit Narayan Mishra—As I Knew Him

Dharam Chand Jain, MP

The premature and tragic death of Lalit Narayan Mishra has created a void in the politics of Bihar which is difficult to fill. In fact when he was at the height of his influence in Bihar and was firmly in control of the rapidly deteriorating situation there, the cruel hands of the assassin struck.

Mishraji had great personal charm. He was an eminent scholar, had a humane and sensitive outlook and was a most capable administrator. His was a noble soul dedicated to serve the cause of the country. Lalit Babu was a good conversationalist and could talk on any subject with ease. He had a keen sense of humour and could appreciate a good remark even when it was at his cost.

He had a great love for the cultural heritage of India and readily patronized cultural activities whenever he could.

An easily approachable person, all who came to Lalit Babu with a problem, found him ready to listen and help. He had a soft corner for the inhabitants of Chotanagpur. Whenever I approached him with one problem or another relating to this area, he gave a patient hearing and valuable advice and guidance. A few days before the calamity, Mishraji told me how passionately he was interested in the all-round development of the Chotanagpur region so that the downtrodden people of the area could be lifted out of the morass. He outlined a short-term intensive plan to achieve the goal. But that was not to be. His dream remained unfulfilled. Nevertheless the ideal he has bequeathed to his fellow countrymen of Bihar would certainly be a beacon light. The achievement of that goal can be the greatest tribute Bihar can pay to its beloved son.

The Lalit Babu I knew

Dr. Madaneshwar Mishra
Vice-Chancellor, L.N. Mithila University

It was in the year 1943 that I met Lalit Babu for the first time. Both of us were studying for Economics Honours at T.N.B. College, Bhagalpur. Both of us were also boarders, though we lived in different hostels. I cannot explain how a mutual understanding and intimacy sprang up between us and how with each day we were drawn closer to each other.

Not long after our first meeting I went to see Lalit Babu in his room. He introduced me to a gentleman whom he described as his father-in-law. At the mention of this relationship I became a little formal and stiff. But Lalit Babu asked me not to be formal, for though his father-in-law, the gentleman treated him as a friend.

The gentleman in question was Shri Tejnath Jhaji. As freedom fighters these two had spent much time together in jail. Therefore, the customary distance between the in-laws of Mithila (so rigidly observed in those days) had disappeared between the two. Lalit Babu, in fact, held him in high esteem. The day he told me about his death he looked visibly grief-stricken. If I remember aright, he also mentioned that it was from tortures in jail that Tejnath had died a premature death.

Our hostel was situated on the outskirts of Bhagalpur town. We had often to go to the town to meet our teachers in connection with our studies, but we had no conveyance. So we jointly bought a cycle and during our stay at Bhagalpur used it together. On some occasions we had to ride together. Lalit Babu would drive the cycle while I would sit behind. It certainly caused him inconvenience but he would say that it would he more inconvenient for him if I drove and he sat on the carrier. In fact, he was not destined to be carried by anybody. On the contrary, Providence had been grooming him for carrying the burdens of thousands of compatriots like me.

We completed our course of studies at Bhagalpur very happily and in 1945 both of us got ourselves admitted to M.A. Economics at the Patna

College. Lalit Babu resided in P.G. Hostel while I was in a Muslim Hostel, now called Iqbal Hostel. We met each other frequently and used to comment on the performance of different teachers. Prof. Sachin Dutta, former Vice-Chancellor of Patna University, was one of our teachers. He taught us political science. We were ardent admirers of his methods of teaching.

From his very student days Lalit Babu had been deeply involved in political activities. For his active participation in the freedom struggle he had been put behind the bars also. While in Bhagalpur I had often found him discussing politics with Kamta Babu (Shri Kamta Pd. Gupta of Saharsa). I was just a passive listener. At Patna the scope of Lalit Babu's politics widened further for he was now a student leader. As far as I remember it was under the leadership of Lalit Babu along with Baliran Babu (Shri Baliram Bhagat), Smt. Tarkeshwari Sinha and others that the students of Patna accorded a rousing reception to Pandit Nehru when he visited Patna. I have mentioned only three persons because they were all my classmates. On one occasion Maulana Azad came to deliver the Convocation Address at the Patna University. Lalit Babu and Baliram Babu decided to present an address of welcome to the Maulana on behalf of the student Congress. They jointly drafted the address but they were not happy with their handwriting. Time was short and the address had to be presented. Moreover, it had to be framed. Finding them in a fix, I went up to them. Lalit Babu almost coaxed and cajoled me into writing it out in my own hand because I wrote a good hand. I wrote it out and they were highly pleased. Not that I think very highly of my own handwriting, I only want to state that Lalit Babu liked my handwriting. My own remark about his handwriting was "Your handwriting is legible but not beautiful." I fondly remember how my remark made him happy. We stayed together at Patna for three years. If I remember aright both of us were admitted into the Law College but I seldom met him there.

While in Patna I discovered that Lalit Babu held Sri Babu and Anugrah Babu in high esteem. Even during student days, he would call on them frequently. He had unswerving faith in Nehru. He had read all his books published till that date. He also looked up to Shri Gulzarilal Nanda with deep regard. He had not the slightest shadow of doubt in his mind that it was through the Congress organization that the country would forge ahead and attain Swaraj. I also remember that it was his constant endeavour to free Bihar from the havoc wrought by the river Koshi. He felt that there should be an independent ministry dealing with the problems created by the 'Sorrow of North Bihar' so as to ensure a speedy and permanent solution of the problems.

Then came August 15, 1947. India became independent. We did not have a wink of sleep that night. At the stroke of 12, the night resounded with the blowing of conches and shouting of slogans. There was illumination all around. Our M.A. Examination was to start very soon. The frenzy of rejoicing caused some sort of disruption in the preparations of students like me also, not to speak of student leaders like Lalit Babu and Baliram Babu. Therefore, it occurred to us something had to be done to get the date of examination extended. Accordingly a delegation of 30 or 40 students of the Patna University waited on the Vice-Chancellor with this appeal. Sir C.P.N. Sinha gave us a patient hearing but he expressed his inability to oblige us. He, however, assured us that there would be gaps between papers and thus in effect we got what we desired. We again plunged ourselves into preparations. One day, when I came across Lalit Babu he wanted me to accompany him to the residence of his elder brother, Rajendra Mishra, in the 'R' Block. His object was to chalk out a plan for the preparation of the ensuing examinations. We stayed together at the 'R' Block for several days and succeeded in preparing answers to some important questions after several days. One of the questions pertained to 'High Command' in our political science paper. It was an important question. Before that I had a very hazy notion about High Command, but Lalit Babu for the first time enlightened me on the structure, nature and functions of the High Command and threw lucid light on all the aspects of the Congress in general and the High Command in particular. Little did I know then that one day he would himself become a member of the Congress High Command.

After the M.A. examination we lost touch with each other. Lalit Babu became deeply absorbed in national politics and I became a lecturer at the Purnea College. During our postgraduate days, I remember having heard Lalit Babu say, while chalking out plans for future life, that he would be only too glad to avail himself of an opportunity to go abroad on some assignment at the U.N.O. He never thought of seeking a job, for he was deeply interested in national affairs. This, of course, refers to those days when those engaged in active politics were held in the highest esteem.

Years afterwards, when I was Principal, Purnea College, he came to Purnea at my request on the occasion of the Annual Vidyapati Parva. At that time Lalit Babu was a Minister of the Union Government, but neither the intervening years nor his elavated status had wrought any change in him: he was the same unassuming, affectionate Lalit Babu I had known during my student days. It is said that power corrupts any man, but power could not corrupt Lalit Babu.

When I went to Delhi in 1971 to participate in the All-India Economics

Conference, I called on him nearly fortyeight hours after my arrival in Delhi. He reproached me for this delay. And then we started reminiscing.

After I became Vice-Chancellor, of Mithila University, I had the pleasure of meeting him several times at Darbhanga and also at Delhi. After he had become Railway Minister, I asked him once: "How do you sanction new railway lines for backward areas when the development of the railways is ordinarily guided by the policy that new rail tracks should be laid in areas where there is no likelihood of loss?" He retorted that according to this policy no new railway line can ever be laid in backward regions. His actual thinking was that in order to ensure national development it was necessary to have a network of railway lines even in the backward regions. As for loss, he was confident that once backwardness was removed there would be no deficit. He had the courage of his convictions and he set about the task with singleness of purpose. By providing long-distance comfortable trains, by sanctioning new broad gauge and metre gauge railway lines and in various other ways he rendered great service to Bihar, and particularly to Mithila.

Lalit Babu is no more in our midst, but his memory will remain enshrined in the hearts of millions of people of Bihar for years to come.

Lalit Narayan Mishra—A Tribute

Jata Shankar Das

The country lost one of its brightest jewels in the death of L. N. Mishra, who was revered and known widely for his ability, generosity, friendship, tenacity, devotion and great organizing capacity. In Mishra's premature death, Mrs. Gandhi lost the most trusted colleague who stood by her firmly at times of trials and tribulations. As a matter of fact, Mishraji had attained great heights and virtually occupied second position both in the Government and in the organization, next only to the Prime Minister. Because of his great organizing capacity, Shri Mishra had full grip over the entire Congress Organization including various State Congress Committees and was in close touch with their internal work, guiding their destiny. The void in the organization remains unfulfilled even today.

In Shri L.N. Mishra's death, Mithila lost one if its worthiest sons and suffered an irreparable loss. It was a matter of great concern for L.N. Mishra that Mithila has been reduced to penury and its sons and daughters are languishing in poverty. He discovered that Mithila suffered on account of devastating floods. He, first of all, took up the cause of taming the Kosi — the river of sorrow — and it was through his strenuous efforts that the Eastern Canals and Kosi Embankments were constructed, converting the flood ravaged areas into a fertile stretch of land. Since then a good number of irrigation schemes, including the Western Kosi Canal have been taken up and they are fast changing the face of the region.

L.N. Mishra, being himself an educationist, was sorry to find that Mithila which was a seat of learning from time immemorial, was lagging behind in educational facilities. He believed that in modern times, education and prosperity move hand in hand. He worked ceaselessly for the establishment of Mithila University, and was ahead of others in establishing a large number of schools and colleges in this area. He stood for imparting that type of education which could liberate the people from the shackles of customs and traditions and free them from the bonds of prejudices. He stood for banishing illiteracy.

Alongwith progress in education, L.N. Mishra also stood for economic prosperity of his beloved land. He discovered that a large number of places in Mithila are far from the railway stations. There are very few metalled roads. As Railway Minister, he took up the construction of a number of new rail lines in the area. He also wanted to convert the metregauge rail line into the broadgauge. Needless to say that development of communication has great bearing upon economic prosperity of an area. Mishra believed that to facilitate growth of industries, rail and road communications had to be developed. Posterity will remember him for his laudable work in this direction.

L.N. Mishra had profound love for his mother tongue, Maithili. Though he was a geat scholar of both English and Hindi, he never spoke to any Maithil in any other language than Maithili. It was his unique fate that everybody who came in contact with him became his great admirer.

Mishra did a lot for the revival of the art and culture of Mithila. He knew that simple village folk, generally women, practise art and crafts as a hobby. He realized that the handicrafts will serve as a means for revival of the culture on the one hand and will add to economic wellbeing of a large number of people, on the other. He was enchanted with the elegance and designs of Madhubani Paintings. This craft is concentrated mostly in villages. The women in the villages paint Gods, Goddesses, birds, animals etc., on the walls of their huts. It is through Shri Mishra that Madhubani Paintings have recently been discovered as a national treasure. Mishra is responsible for creating a worldwide market for Madhubani Paintings and providing a means of livelihood to a large number of artists.

L.N. Mishra stood for high ideals. As stated above, he wanted to lead people from poverty to prosperity where people free from exploitation are rewarded suitably for their toil. Lalit Babu dedicated his entire life to the service of the country. We bow before this immortal soul with respect.

Lalit—My Comrade-in-Arms

Ramakant Jha

My first encounter with Lalit Babu took place in 1941 when the District Conference of the Students' Federation was held at Madhubani. By that time he was already a full-fledged student leader while only a student of the first year Arts of C.M. College, Darbhanga.

Like Nehru he introduced himself to Jayprakash Narayan on the latter's return from America. He also introduced himself to me and soon gained knowledge of every detail of the organizational machinery of the Conference. He impressed me as a simple and forthright person capable of great depth of feeling.

Subsequently he became an active participant in the Bihar Provincial Conference of the Students' Federation held at Laheriasarai in 1941. In December of the same year the All-India Conference of the Students' Federation at Patna passed the historic resolution declaring the War as a peoples' war. This led Lalit Babu and me to quit the Federation alongwith several others and join the Students' Congress formed earlier under the leadership of M.L. Shaw of Bombay.

Meanwhile I had passed the Matriculation Examination and got admitted to the first year Arts class of C.M. College where Lalit Babu was now in the second year. He had founded the Jayprakash Lodge which soon became the centre of student politics in Darbhanga. Later the lodge was destined to lead the 1942 'Quit India' Movement. Among his better known comrades were L.N. Jha, Kamta Prasad Gupta of Saharsa and others. Later when Jayprakash criticized him at a Gandhi Maidan meeting at Patna Lalit Babu feelingly referred to the Lodge. He confided to Shri Krishna Kant Jha, our common friend, how faithful he had been to J.P. during the early years of his political life and how he held him in high esteem even after he had become a Congress Minister.

Lalit Babu was always willing to help the Students' Movement. Choudhary Ram Kishor Roy, though in the Socialist Party, always refers to this aspect of Lalit Babu. On one occasion Lalit Babu had to pledge an

ornament of his wife's to raise money for a Students' Conference held at Darbhanga.

In 1942, Lalit Babu, then a student of the third year plunged headlong into the Movement and was imprisoned for six months. He was kept in Patna Camp Jail where I had the privilege of joining him some time later. After his release in 1943 he joined T.N.J. College, Bhagalpur. After my release from the Bhagalpur Camp Jail in January, 1945 I seized the opportunity to go and see him in his college hostel. During our talk the Hostel Superintendent entered the room on his round. He scolded Lalit Babu for having granted an interview to a revolutionary (in the superintendent's eyes).

Lalit Babu took his M.A. in 1947 and was offered a lecturership at T.N.J. College, Bhagalpur, by telegram. He refused the offer in favour of his continuing political activity. He worked as Research Secretary of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee and continued there till he was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1952. Later he was elected to the Rajya Sabha.

In the course of a debate on the Railway Board, a member of the Lok Sabha alleged that as Railway Minister, Lalit Babu had been shirking his political responsibility vis-a-vis the Board. In reply Lalit Babu said that politics was in his very blood and nothing could be nearer to the truth. Lalit Babu was right. He started in politics even during his student days. With time his responsibilities grew. He first became Parliamentary Secretary at the Centre and then Deputy Minister and then Minister of State and finally Cabinet Minister for Railways. It is needless to add that all these political responsibilities he discharged with decorum and decency, efficiency, industry, and intelligence. He did a great deal for Bihar and in his death we lost a great man who, had he been alive, could have done much more for this poor state.

The Role of University Teachers—A Tribute to the Late L.N. Mishra

B. K. Jha

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The late L.N. Mishra, popularly known as Lalit Babu, belonged to my district, Saharsa. But I had not met him or even seen this courteous and magnanimous man while he lived. When the news of his death was received I rushed from Patna College to Sadaqat Ashram and found him wrapped in a shroud of flowers. And ironically this was the first, and also the last, time that I saw him. But it was not Lalit Babu the Railway Minister, Lalit Babu the influential politician, Lalit Babu the resident of my district, or Lalit Babu the man who was lying there. It was just a corpse. Whether he had gone to reunite with the universal mother earth in the universal womb of mankind, or was fraternizing with other souls of the past, or had simply passed into another world, or was in a state of 'dreamless sleep,' I do not know. Melancholy took hold of me. As long as he was alive, he remained a controversial figure. Some glorified him, others vilified him; his friends admired him, his enemies criticized him; he was respected by his followers and feared by his opponents. In this world goodness is a posthumous gift. The world is never convinced of our reason, of our sincerity, of the seriousness of our intent so long as we are alive. Death alone glorifies us. And Lalit Babu was no exception. He was glorified only when he died.

Whatever his limitations, as long as he lived Lalit Babu tried his best to remove the poverty, ignorance, and backwardness of Bihar. With this aim in view he helped to establish Mithila University in the backward region of North Bihar. The best tribute that we can pay him is not by naming the university after him, but by making it an ideal one so that Mithila may regain its lost heritage of learning and send its alumni to work for the construction of a new and prosperous Bihar. It is in this context that I propose to discuss the role of teachers.

A university is not a place for seeking wealth, power, and glory. It is not a centre for job hunters. It is not a platform to propagate, an arena to

give free rein to caste prejudices. It is an abode of ideas and ideals. It stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas, and for the search for truth. It stands for the progress of the human race towards higher objectives. In a word, it is a place where men learn to love reason and virtue, and shun darkness and obscurantism. Our task, then, is to cultivate the growth of sensitive minds, generous hearts and free spirits in our universities. And this is possible only when its teachers, grow out of their sectional loyalties with open themselves to universal, albeit more human values.

A university, is essentially a society for the seekers of truth, and demands a high standard of conduct and integrity from all its teachers. Their pursuit of truth, needs, above all, courage and fearlessness. The vision of a great university with timid teachers is inconceivable.

Recently we have been hearing a great deal about committed politicians, committed civil servants, committed judges, et al. Should university teachers be committed? Opinions differ. There are people who maintain that commitment implies a reversion to a state where blind faith takes precedence over scientific thought, dogma over creativeness and arbitrariness over public opinion. Commitment leads to the unhealthy cult of hero-worship, generates a hierarchy of its own servants, and humiliates the dignity of man. Commitment means a 'bowing down', a knuckling under. There are others who advance the argument that an attitude of non-commitment can crystallize and become accepted only in a stabilized society where the foundations of national existence are generally taken for granted and where social conflict runs at a tension so low that it fails to communicate itself to the sphere of education. India was, during the course of her independence movement, pregnant with revolution; then came the birth pangs; followed by post-natal fevers; and now at last appear symptoms of recovery — or are they perhaps only portents of further disorder? University teachers should not remain uninvolved in so many convulsions of national life. I am inclined to believe that just as a university without ideas is like a body without a soul, a teacher without the sense of commitment is a man without any sense of purpose in life — a soul without sparkle. Hence teachers must be committed. But commitment must not be confused with immediate political utility or with political subservience. By commitment, I mean commitment to ideas, to ideals, to principles, to truth. It is true that we cannot bear an overexposure to reality, that truth is not always beautiful, and that its discovery does not necessarily make us happy. Nevertheless, it is truth alone which frees us from delusions that confront us and from restraints that constrict our urge for innovation. Hence teachers must be openly, boldly, and fearlessly

committed to truth. It is a great crime for teachers to hide their talents, to prefer their closed lives to freedom in the search for truth and to purchase their continued existence by a compromise with injustice and falsehood. They must not be mealy-mouthed and timorous in expressing their ideas. They must speak boldly and clearly. After all teachers are not civil servants obliged to carry out the behests of men who have neither the scholorship nor their experience in dealing with the young, and whose only attitude towards education is that of propaganda. "Any man who has the genuine impulse of the teachers," says Russell, "will be more anxious to survive in his books than in the flesh."

Scholars, thinkers, and teachers are not expected to remain confined to the cloistered seclusion of a university. We are living in an age of rapid and profound revolution. The lives of men and of nations are undergoing transformations the like of which history has rarely known. The birth of new nations, the impact of new machines, the threat of new weapons, and the stirring of new ideas have alienated mankind from its sentimental attachment to traditional ideas. The Industrial Revoution has destroyed the home and the use of contraceptives is destroying the family and the old morality. God, once the consolation of man's brief life and his refuge in suffering, is just an old dream now. In such a situation it is for scholars, thinkers, and teachers of the university to offer dynamic conceptions for the remodelling of society. Unfortunately instead of attempting to mobilize the social system and seeking to reconstruct social attitudes and institutions, the teachers themselves have become prisoners of society. Most of them indulge in either self-glorification or perverse obstinacy.

All this is probably due to the fact that the whole system of our intellectual and ethical education is corrupt. It is perverted by our uncritical appreciation of things that are said. We are educated to act with an eye on the footlights. The whole problem of educating man to a sane appreciation of his own importance relative to that of other individuals is thoroughly muddled by the ethics of fame and fate, by a morality based on the worship of power. Instead of a balanced combination of individualism and altruism, a romantic combination of egoism and collectivism is cultivated. The importance of the self is romantically exaggerated and promotes tension between personality and environment, between individuality and collectivity, between one-self and other-self, between man and his group. A man wishes either to dominate or to submit—to wrestle with fate and earn a measure of fame, or to live anonymously with the masses. It is this ethics of domination and submission that is nurturing and nourishing the neurotic and the hysterical in this modern age. We need, therefore, an ethics which overrides the demands of success and reward, name and fame. Such an

ethics has already been taught us by the Bhagavad Gita. Our education should be remodelled in such a way that we may be taught to do our work; to make our sacrifices for the sake of this work, without desiring praise. A sacrifice may mean just as much, or even more, when it is made anonymously. We must find justification in our work, in what we are doing, and not in the prize-posts of readership or professorship or vice-chancellorship that we manage to secure for ourselves. This is not possible as long as we are enamoured of the world and its tinsel glitter. Let us remember that the best work in the world is achieved by those who work with an attitude of detachment and bear the burden of defeated hopes. The teachers of ancient India knew no fear, not even the fear of death. These changes require of Indian teachers a new simplicity of life in place of a superstitious reverence for material conditions.

Organized party spirit is one of the greatest dangers of our time. It should be the business of teachers to stand outside the strife of parties and endeavour to instil in the young the habit of impartial inquiry. They are not expected to flatter the prejudices either of the mobs or of the officials. Their professional virtue demands from them a readiness to do justice to all sides and to endeavour to rise above controversy to a region of dispassionate scientific investigation.

The duty of university teachers is not merely to mitigate the ugliness of petty controversies, but also to act as guardians of civilization and culture. No man can be a great teacher unless he is inspired by the zeal to perform this task. Civilization is not merely an accumulation of material comforts. Knowledge and emotion are inextricably linked to it. At the intellectual level a civilized man is aware of himself as a microcosm in relation to the space-time-continuum. He regards his country as one among many, each with an equal right to live and think and feel; and he interprets his own age in relation to the past and the future. At the emotional level a civilized man enlarges his heart as he does his mind. He cultivates compassion and understanding and avoids reprobation and cynicism. He prefers to discover and remove evil to meaningless soap-box oratory. Likewise, culture is not an intellectual pretension or code of convention. It is an attitude of life which finds nothing that is human, alien or unclean. Culture produces an even temper, an egalitarian outlook, and strength of mind. Education, to be complete, must be humane. It must include not only a training of the intellect, but also refinement of the heart and a discipline of the spirit. This is possible only when teachers are prepared to convey this message of civilization and culture to the young.

No man can be a good teacher unless he has feelings of warm affection for his pupils. Rabindranath Tagore said: "A teacher who loves students

most is the best." Teachers, therefore, must possess elements of both comprehension and affection. They must approach students and their problems with feeling and sympathy. They are like medical men: they are expected to cure wayward students by mental medicine.

It has often been suggested that teachers should impart to the pupils what they themselves believe to be of value and stimulate their interest in these values. But though this is true in principle, it is hardly practicable. For it presupposes a fraternal relationship between teacher and pupil and this, on account of the vast number of pupils, is virtually impossible in our educational campus. Accordingly attempts to impose higher values not only become unsuccessful, but may also lead to harm. To avoid any such damage, the young should be educated to become independent of us and taught to make their own choices. On no account should their natural growth be warped or twisted to suit the whims and purposes of the teacher. And this caution is necessary if vigour, elan, and generosity and not their negative aspects—envy, destruction and cruelty—are to function. It should therefore be the aim of teachers to train the young against all psychological deformities and kinks.

Above all, teachers must endeavour to produce in their pupils, if democracy is to survive, a kind of tolerance that springs from a desire to understand those who are different from them. It is perhaps a natural human impulse to be amused or horrified by manners and customs different from those to which we are accustomed. It is perhaps for this reason that ants and savages kill all strangers. Those who have never travelled find it difficult to be tolerant of the queer ways and outlandish beliefs of other nations and times, other sects and political parties. This kind of obscurantism is the antithesis of a civilized outlook. Intolerance is the first sign of a faulty education. While an uneducated person behaves with arrogant impatience, the behaviour of a truly educated man is marked by humility and courtesy. Tolerance, however, does not imply a forbearance of the bigoted and the fanatical. It must never become an excuse for weakness. In short, a passive tolerance is to be avoided. Poise and equanimity must have a hard core of strength at the centre, if they are to function at all. The theory of tolerance is based on the assumption that men are rational creatures. Universal tolerance becomes questionable when its rationale no longer prevails. Therefore if any movement or school of thought is not prepared to meet us on the level of a rational argument, and teaches its adherents to answer arguments by the use of force it loses its claim to be treated with kindness and may be suppressed by force if necessary. Teachers should keep all this in mind, for the function of a university is to produce not only scholars with a vision, but also leaders of a new

democracy. The really educated people are neither parrots who have learnt by rote nor are they blinkered specialists who cannot see beyond their own discipline, nor even theorists who are fired by no desire to act upon their knowledge. The really educated people are those who emerge from the university with a wider range of sympathy and a keener desire to act.

Mithila has not been renowned for either its wealth or valour. It has been known for centuries only for its learning. The alumni of Mithila have gone out and disseminated knowledge and the fruits of learning. What is Mithila now? It lies prostrate, languishing among ruins. It is a breeding ground of poverty and pestilence. Has it nothing to contribute to the nation but the contagion of its own laziness, lethargy, and indigence? Are its people to go harrying and tormenting one another from ignorance and vengeance until all that invests human life with dignity has been obliterated?

It is to this question that the teachers of the Mithila University have to find an answer to if they are to justify the existence of the university. If Mithila owes any debt to its tradition and if the university is aware of the contribution of Lalit Babu to its establishment, it becomes incumbent on the teachers of Mithila University to train their pupils in such a way that they may go forth into the world equipped with knowledge, filled with culture, imbued with sympathy, and fired with devotion to duty. Though no crystal-gazer, I still own my hope and faith that in the days to come teachers will regain their lost prestige and honour, and discharge duties that the country expects of them.

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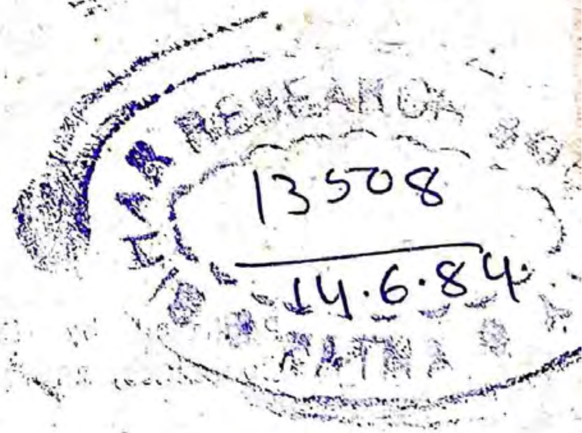
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